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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS, U.S.-RUSSIA-CHINA
RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused May 24-27 news coverage on KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung's visit to China Monday and the new developments in cross-Straits relations, on the controversy over whether a KMT legislator still retains U.S. citizenship, on the soaring commodity prices in Taiwan, and on the Basic Competency Test for Taiwan junior high school students.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" criticized the Ma Ying-jeou administration and the KMT for anxiously pushing for cross-Straits talks. The article said the Ma administration is walking voluntarily into China's trap and is therefore putting Taiwan's sovereignty in danger. An op-ed in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," written by Ralph Cossa, president of the Pacific Forum affiliated with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, urged Beijing to make some significant gestures in response to President Ma's call for "reconciliation and truce" between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News," however, said Ma's peace offer will lock Taiwan into an "iron cage," which will gradually take the power out of the Taiwan people's hands to determine their own future. An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" discussed the historical significance of KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung's upcoming meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao and described it as the best "historical opportunity" for both sides to create a win-win situation. In terms of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's recent visit to Beijing, an editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" predicted that a new Cold War could soon begin unless the United States, Russia and China sit down and talk. End summary.

¶3. Cross-Straits Relations

A) "The New Administration Voluntarily Walks into China's Trap; Taiwan's Sovereignty Meets with Disaster"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 700,000] editorialized (5/27):

"... Evidently, the 'new era' advocated by President Ma did not refer to consolidating Taiwan's democracy and sovereignty, and instead, it denoted the beginning of Taiwan being ultimately unified by China. Ever since Ma was elected, Beijing has been insisting on using the '1992 Consensus,' which offers no room for 'respective interpretation,' as the basis for both sides of the Taiwan Strait to resume dialogue. Still, the new [Ma] administration and the KMT are keen on walking to the negotiation table daringly, a move which is akin to abandoning [Taiwan's] own position and yielding to the conditions set by China. The so-called 'putting aside controversies' has turned out to be putting aside Taiwan's sovereignty. Such a political direction runs entirely counter to Ma's campaign statement, in which he said he was running for the presidency of a sovereign nation. ...

"There are two reasons why the new [Ma] administration and the KMT have been behaving so anxiously [in pushing for cross-Strait talks]: First, their ideology. They do not recognize the sovereign nation constituted by the 23 million people [of Taiwan]. They only recognize one China and that Taiwan is part of China. Second, the check Ma and the KMT wrote regarding starting direct charter flights across the Taiwan Strait and allowing Chinese tourists to Taiwan beginning in July was akin to tying a rope around Taiwan's neck and handing the other end over to China; talking about the 1992 Consensus only without mentioning one China with respective interpretations will thoroughly obliterate the essence of sovereignty for Taiwan or the Republic of China. ...

"More serious is that the second-track [dialogue] established by the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) will allow China to employ a double-dealing strategy, taking advantage of the KMT-CCP platform to place pressure on the new [Ma] administration. That is, from Lien Chan to Wu Poh-hsiung, [all KMT officials] will become the targets whom China wants to win over. It is imaginable that the political consensus reached by the Lien-Hu meeting and Wu-Hu meeting will form a kind of pressure such that political parties will dictate the policies, a way that will force the new [Ma] administration to make more substantive concessions to China and for Taiwan to give up more of its leverage. It can be said that this is a trap set up by China to 'hurry the horses into the stable.' In this vein, there will be an irreversible trend of Taiwan being tilted toward China for the next four years..."

B) "Beijing Must Offer an Olive Branch"

Ralph Cossa, president of the Pacific Forum of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and senior editor of Comparative Connections, a quarterly electronic journal, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: RELATIONS

30,000] (5/25):

"... It should be relatively easy for Beijing to respond positively to Ma's calls for direct weekend charter flights and visits to Taiwan by Chinese tourists and other economic and cultural exchanges. Some security gesture, such as a visible drawback of missiles opposite Taiwan, is also doable without dramatically changing the security calculus. But, is Beijing prepared to make significant gestures aimed at truly improving Taiwan's sense of security and easing its international isolation? A failure by Beijing to respond positively to Ma's olive branches will seriously undercut the new Taiwanese leader as he tries to build consensus at home in support of his forward-looking cross-Strait policies. His address is already being labeled by the opposition as 'nave' and 'wishful thinking.' Will Beijing prove this to be the case? ...

"It appears that Beijing is still struggling to figure out how to deal with a potentially friendly government in Taipei after years of branding every positive gesture by the Chen administration a mere 'splittist trick.' ... It is important for Beijing not to wait too long before making some significant gestures. For starters, it can observe Ma's call for a 'truce' in the international arena. ... Ma took a big political risk in reaching out to Beijing. Beijing needs to respond. Washington also needs to respond to Ma's gestures, while strongly encouraging Beijing to make significant positive gestures."

C) "Ma's 'Peace' Offers Iron Cage"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (5/27):

"... Ma's slogans of 'one China, separate verbal expressions' and 'no unification, no independence and no force' and his unilateral acceptance of the 'ethno-nationalist' proposition that the Taiwan people 'belong to the Chinese nation' reflect a fundamental shift in Taiwan's political paradigm. ... Ultimately, Ma's attempt to realize 'peace through integration' threatens to lock Taiwan into an "iron cage" that will gradually take the power to determine our right to determine the shape of our way of life and its core values out of our hands. Whether this grim

prospect is inevitable will depend on no one else but us and our resolve to defending the right of Taiwan people to act as 'masters of our own home.'

D) "The Historical Significance of the First Meeting between Leaders of the Ruling Parties of Both Sides of the Taiwan Strait"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (5/26):

"KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung set out for his visit to China today and will meet with General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee Hu Jintao the day after tomorrow. This is the first meeting between leaders of the ruling parties of both sides of the Taiwan Strait, which is of great significance. ... Wu is the Chairman of the KMT, the ruling party of the Republic of China. This is a political reality from which Hu did not shrink when he personally invited Wu to visit China. However, since Hu has accepted [the reality that] Wu is 'the KMT Chairman,' it certainly and definitely implies that [Hu] at the same time acquiesces to the fact that the Republic of China is ruled by the KMT. After all, if there is no Republic of China, how can Wu possibly be the chairman of the ROC's ruling party? ...

"Therefore, we hope that the 'Wu-Hu meeting' between leaders of the ruling parties of both sides of the Strait share the common goal of walking jointly on the road of democracy and bringing happiness to their peoples. We also hope they will encourage each other and wish one another well. [Both sides of the Taiwan Strait] should lower the level of 'power struggle' as much as they can, and create, to the greatest extent possible, an atmosphere of 'healthy competition' and 'cooperation' ..."

14. U.S.-China-Russia Relations

"Beijing's New (Old) Best Friend"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (5/27):

"... Similar fears appear to be animating two countries today: China and Russia. No historical friends (despite a fleetingly shared ideology) and long haunted by border disputes, Moscow and Beijing are being pushed into the same corner by policies of the US and its regional allies. Whether their reading of Washington's true intentions is accurate or not remains to be seen, but one thing is RELATIONS

sure - the two are weary and they are acting on it, epitomized in no uncertain terms by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to Beijing over the weekend. ... While it will be years, if not decades, before an effective US defense system can be deployed, China and Russia have already begun to adjust their policies and respective militaries to counter what they perceive as an attempt by the US to buttress its hegemonic power and thus allow it to dictate its policies in a part of the world that, in their eyes, is more theirs than Washington's.

"Rather than sit down with its counterparts in Beijing and Moscow and find common ground on missile defense, Washington has acted in a manner that has alienated its counterparts and managed to make two unlikely allies shed their differences and join forces to counterbalance the US. Furthermore, the failure to engage in dialogue and the apprehensions that this gives rise to also threatens to compel Beijing and Moscow to expand their newfound friendship to include other countries - Iran comes to mind - that, for one reason or another, are inimical to the US and the alliances it leads. There are, at present, no signs that dialogue between the two blocs will improve anytime soon. Secrecy, as the Cold War made crystal clear, begets secrecy. Beijing's lack of transparency on military matters - which has earned it no small amount of criticism by Washington - has contributed to the very mistrust in Japan, Taiwan and the US, among others, that makes the deployment of a missile defense shield desirable. But this plan also gives rise to a vicious circle in Russia and China, where the unclear intentions of the US have prompted them to bolster their defenses in a bid to countervail what they perceive as a threat to their sovereignties.

Unless the principal parties sit down and talk soon, a new Cold War could soon begin in the east, with implications for all, not least Taiwan."

WANG